

Operations Blood Drive and Black Crown

U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara

May 13, 2010

Good afternoon. My name is Preet Bharara, and I am the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York.

Today, we bring new hope to the City of Newburgh. In recent months, the gang problem there has spiraled out of control. The drug problem has overwhelmed the City. And the cycle of violence that always comes with gangs and drugs has reached crisis proportions. The situation in Newburgh has, quite simply, become unacceptable.

So law enforcement took a dramatic step today towards restoring law and order to a community in need.

Let me briefly tell you what we have done and why we did it.

Today, we have launched the most sweeping federal crackdown on gangs in the Hudson Valley that anyone here can remember. That crackdown involved the participation of local, state, and federal officials, working together in an unprecedented cooperative effort.

- In two separate Indictments, we have brought federal narcotics charges against 78 members and associates of two notorious national gangs, who each set up a base of operations in the City of Newburgh – they are the Bloods and the Latin Kings.
- As alleged in the Indictments, these gang members are not “wannabes,” but die-hard participants in their respective criminal enterprises.
- They are organized; they are violent; they are ruthless; and they are – or were – the principal drug dealers operating in Newburgh today.
- As alleged, if you crossed or offended the Bloods or Latin Kings, or if you invaded their drug turf, you were asking to be beaten, stabbed, or shot.

So, why did we take such a dramatic step and involve so many law enforcement agencies? Well, as I said, the situation in Newburgh had simply become intolerable.

- In 2008, Newburgh had the distinction of being the per capita murder capital of New York.
- In the past two years, there have been more than a dozen killings, mostly of young people and mostly as a result of gang warfare.

- Newburgh has twice the general crime rate of the rest of New York, and it has four times the violent crime rate.
- Over the past year, the Mayor, the Orange County District Attorney, the County Executive, and regular law-abiding citizens have been pleading for federal help.
- The crisis in Newburgh has even become a part of the discussion among top leaders in Washington. Senator Schumer has been doing everything he can to bring aid to Newburgh because this is so important, and even the Attorney General of the United States has become involved. I have spoken personally with him about the situation in Newburgh on a number of occasions.
- But my Office's commitment to the area goes far back. After I took office in August, one of the very first discussions I had with the head of the FBI in New York was about the gang problem in Newburgh. Even before then, prosecutors from my office were working hand-in-glove with the FBI, the Orange County DA, the Newburgh Police Chief, and all the members of the Hudson Valley Safe Streets Task Force.
- The first fruit of this recent coordinated effort has come today in the form of multiple agencies, working together, to clean up the streets of Newburgh.
- We took this action, because enough is enough.
- We took this action, because children should be playing – not dying – in the streets.
- We took this action to send the clear message that if you join a gang or deal drugs or engage in violence in Newburgh, you are facing federal time now.
- And we took this action because the citizens of Newburgh want their city back.
- And I can pledge to you that this is only the beginning, not the end, of our investigation and our commitment to the City of Newburgh.

As you can see, this was a large operation. Over 500 agents and officers took part in the takedown as part of the Hudson Valley Safe Streets Task Force.

Today is National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Day, and there could be no more fitting tribute to those who have fallen than to come together across federal, state and local lines to try and bring new hope to Newburgh.

Let me thank and acknowledge some of the people responsible for today's action:

- The FBI, represented by Special Agent-in-Charge George Venizelos;
- The Newburgh City Police, represented by Chief Eric A. Paolilli;

- Orange County District Attorney Frank Phillips;
- Orange County Sheriff's Office, represented by Sheriff Carl Dubois.
- There are also representatives from each of the other agencies, police departments, and sheriff's offices that make up the Hudson Valley Safe Streets Task Force. I can't acknowledge everyone:
 - o This includes FBI Supervisory Senior Resident Agent Jim Gagliano – who has been a force of nature on this and gives so much back to the community;
 - o FBI Agent Neil Donovan and Newburgh Police Detective Steven Blunt, who are the case agents on Operation Blood Drive;
 - o FBI Agent Jose Flores ATF Agent Andy Boss, who are the case agents on Operation Black Crown;
 - o I'd also like to thank our career prosecutors who have worked so tirelessly on this case: Boyd Johnson, the Deputy U.S. Attorney – without whose leadership we wouldn't be here today; David Rody, Chief of this Office's Violent Crimes Unit; Diane Gujarati, Chief of this Office's White Plains Division; and Assistant United States Attorneys Mike D. Maimin, Nick McQuaid, and Harris Fischman.

And please indulge me in thanking all of our other partners:

Joseph Green, Supervisory Special Agent for the New York Field Division, ATF

James T. Hayes, Jr., Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Office, ICE

Keith Corlett, Captain for the New York State Police

Kenneth Torreggiani, Deputy Inspector General, New York State Department Of Correctional Services

John J. Mahoney, Chief of Police for the Town of Newburgh Police Department

Steven Claudio, Regional Director for the New York State Division of Parole

Sean Byrne, Acting Commissioner for the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services

Steven Minard, Captain for the City of Poughkeepsie Police Department